

In the Claims

Please amend the following claims:

1. (ORIGINAL) A method of conducting decentralized elections over a wide area network having generally unrestricted access thereto, comprising:

electronically transmitting a ballot across the wide area network to a plurality of individual user stations on the wide area network;

receiving a digital signature and an associated ballot selection from a voter at each of a plurality of the individual user stations;

electronically transmitting the ballot selection and digital signature over the wide area network to a central server on the wide area network;

verifying the digital signature at the central server; and

tabulating the ballot selection after verifying the digital signature.

2. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

providing information relevant to choices on the ballot on remote servers on the wide area network; and

providing the voter with access to the relevant information from the individual user station.

3. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 2, wherein providing the voter with access comprises providing a search tool for user-defined searches of publicly accessible data across the wide area network.

4. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 1, further comprising associating the digital signature with demographic information on the voter.

5. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 4, wherein the demographic information is stored on a server remote from the individual user station.

6. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 1, further comprising providing personal information in a user-modifiable demographic profiler on the individual user station.

7. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 6, further comprising associating the ballot selection with the personal information in the demographic profiler and electronically transmitting the personal information with the ballot selection over the wide area network to the central server.

8. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 1, wherein receiving the digital signature comprises scanning a biometric feature of the voter at the individual user station and digitizing the scanned characteristics of the biometric feature.

9. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 1, further comprising providing the voter with results of tabulation of a plurality of previously conducted ballot selections.

10. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

composing a poll survey;

transmitting the poll survey over the wide area network to the plurality of individual user stations;

receiving a completed survey from a user at each of a plurality of the individual user stations;

electronically transmitting the completed survey over the wide area network to a central server on the wide area network; and

tabulating the completed poll survey.

11. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 10, wherein composing the poll survey is conducted on the individual user station.

12. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 10, further comprising:

providing personal information in a user-modifiable demographic profiler on the individual user station;

associating the personal information to the completed survey in a double blind manner; and

electronically transmitting the personal information with the completed survey over the wide area network.

13. (ONCE AMENDED) The method of Claim 1, further comprising compiling demographic reports on the poll results using the [person] personal information.

Q1 14. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 1, further comprising encrypting the digital signature and the associated ballot selection prior to electronically transmitting, and decrypting the digital signature and the associated ballot selection prior to verifying the digital signature.

15. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 1, further comprising;

composing a petition;

electronically transmitting the petition across the wide area network to the plurality of individual user stations on the wide area network;

receiving a digital signature associated with the petition from a voter at each of a plurality of the individual user stations;

electronically transmitting the digital signature over the wide area network to a central server on the wide area network;

verifying the digital signature at the central server; and

tabulating the digital signature associated with the petition after verifying the digital signature.

16. (ONCE AMENDED) A method of voting using a wide area network including at least one central server and a plurality of geographically remote individual user stations, comprising:

placing a ballot listing candidate[/] or proposition choices on the wide area network;

displaying the ballot to a voter at the individual user stations on the wide area network;

linking the voter to candidate/proposition information stored on remote servers on the wide area network and allowing the voter at each individual user station to review the candidate/proposition information prior to completing the ballot;

receiving, at each individual user station, selections made by the voter in completing the ballot of candidates and propositions;

receiving, at each individual user station, a digital signature from the voter;

associating the digital signature with the completed ballot selections;

transmitting the ballot selections and signature over the wide area network;

receiving the ballot selections and signature at the central processor server;

verifying the digital signature at the central processor server, including confirming a voting status;

recording the verified received ballot selections;

tabulating the verified received ballot selections with other verified received ballot selections from other voters at the central processor server; and

publishing the tabulated selections.

17. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 16, further comprising transmitting a poll to the voter at each of the plurality of individual user stations.

18. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 17, wherein the poll is generated on one of the individual user stations.

19. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 17, further comprising transmitting a petition to the voter at each of the plurality of individual user stations.

20. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 19, wherein receiving a digital signature comprises receiving biometric information, the biometric information associated with the voter in a demographic database stored on the central server.

21. (ONCE AMENDED) A method of conducting a poll over a wide area network, the method comprising:

electronically transmitting a polling survey to a plurality of users connected to the wide area network;

receiving a plurality of electric responses to the polling survey from the users;

associating each response with personal information regarding a corresponding user, the personal information excluding the identity of the corresponding user;

tabulating responses; and

generating a demographic report relating the responses to the personal information.

22. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 21, wherein the personal information is derived from a pre-existing database and associating each response comprises automatically associating the personal information with the corresponding response.

23. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 22, wherein the pre-existing database resides on an individual user station on the wide area network and is at least partially modifiable by the user.

24. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 22, wherein

the pre-existing database resides on a central server on the wide area network; and
associating each response comprises associating identifying information regarding
the user with the response at an individual user station on the wide area network,
transmitting the response to the central server, and associating the response with the
personal information of the corresponding user at the central server.

25. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 24, wherein the identifying information
comprises a digital signature.

26. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 25, wherein the digital signature comprises
biometric information.

27. (ORIGINAL) The method of Claim 21, wherein generating the poll is conducted
on an individual user station on the wide area network.

28. (ORIGINAL) A system for decentralized balloting, comprising:

at least one central server;

a plurality of user stations remote from and in communication with the central
server across a wide area network, each of the user stations including a biometric
digitizing device;

a ballot generator transmitting ballots to each of the user stations;

a poll generator transmitting polls to selectable user stations;

an associator on each of the user stations, the associator associating ballot
selections with a digital signature and associating poll responses with the digital signature;

a verifier on the central server receiving digital signatures, associated ballot selections and associated poll responses, the verifier verifying the validity of the associated ballot selections and associated poll responses; and

a tabulator compiling ballot selections and poll responses from the plurality of user stations.

29. (ONCE AMENDED) The system of Claim 28, further comprising a demographic database on the central server, associating the associated ballot selections and the associated poll responses with demographic information by way of the digital signatures[;].

30. (ONCE AMENDED) The system of Claim 28, wherein the wide area network comprises [the Internet™] any public network wherein individuals can gain unrestricted access to said wide area network known through publicly available hardware, software, and registration.

31. (ORIGINAL) The system of Claim 28, wherein the poll generator resides on each of the user stations.

32. (ORIGINAL) The system of Claim 28, further comprising a demographic profiler on each user station, the demographic profiler storing personal information of a user.

33. (ORIGINAL) The system of Claim 32, wherein the demographic profiler automatically associates the personal information with outgoing data without associating identifying information.

34. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 10 wherein individuals and/or groups may work along or together in conducting polls, petition drives and/or elections using the digital network.

35. (NEW) A method of conducting decentralized elections over a wide area network having generally unrestricted access thereto, comprising:

electronically transmitting a ballot across the wide area network to a plurality of individual user stations on the wide area network;

receiving a digital signature and an associated ballot selection from a voter at each of a plurality of the individual user stations;

electronically transmitting the ballot selection and digital signature over the wide area network to a central server on the wide area network;

verifying the digital signature at the central server; and

tabulating the ballot selection after verifying the digital signature.

36. (NEW) The method of Claim 35, further comprising:

providing information relevant to choices on the ballot on remote servers on the wide area network; and

providing the voter with access to the relevant information from the individual user station.

37. (NEW) The method of Claim 36, wherein providing the voter with access comprises providing a search tool for user-defined searches of publicly accessible data across the wide area network.

38. (NEW) The method of Claim 35, further comprising associating the digital signature with demographic information on the voter.

39. (NEW) The method of Claim 38, wherein the demographic information is stored on a server remote from the individual user station.

40. (NEW) The method of Claim 35, further comprising providing personal information in a user-modifiable demographic profiler on the individual user station.

41. (NEW) The method of Claim 40, further comprising associating the ballot selection with the personal information in the demographic profiler and electronically transmitting the personal information with the ballot selection over the wide area network to the central server.
42. (NEW) The method of Claim 35, wherein receiving the digital signature comprises scanning a biometric feature of the voter at the individual user station and digitizing the scanned characteristics of the biometric feature.
43. (NEW) The method of Claim 35, further comprising providing the voter with results of tabulation of a plurality of previously conducted ballot selections.
44. (NEW) The method of Claim 35, further comprising:
- composing a poll survey;
 - transmitting the poll survey over the wide area network to the plurality of individual user stations;
 - receiving a completed survey from a user at each of a plurality of the individual user stations;
 - electronically transmitting the completed survey over the wide area network to a central server on the wide area network; and
 - tabulating the completed poll survey.
45. (NEW) The method of Claim 44, wherein composing the poll survey is conducted on the individual user station.
46. (NEW) The method of Claim 44, further comprising:
- providing personal information in a user-modifiable demographic profiler on the individual user station;

associating the personal information to the completed survey in a double blind manner; and

electronically transmitting the personal information with the completed survey over the wide area network.

47. (NEW) The method of Claim 40, further comprising compiling demographic reports on the poll results using the person information.

48. (NEW) The method of Claim 35, further comprising encrypting the digital signature and the associated ballot selection prior to electronically transmitting, and decrypting the digital signature and the associated ballot selection prior to verifying the digital signature.

49. (NEW) The method of Claim 35, further comprising;

composing a petition;

electronically transmitting the petition across the wide area network to the plurality of individual user stations on the wide area network;

receiving a digital signature associated with the petition from a voter at each of a plurality of the individual user stations;

electronically transmitting the digital signature over the wide area network to a central server on the wide area network;

verifying the digital signature at the central server; and

tabulating the digital signature associated with the petition after verifying the digital signature.

50. (NEW) A method of voting using a wide area network including at least one central server and a plurality of geographically remote individual user stations, comprising:

placing a ballot listing candidate/proposition choices on the wide area network;

displaying the ballot to a voter at the individual user stations on the wide area network;

linking the voter to candidate/proposition information stored on remote servers on the wide area network and allowing the voter at each individual user station to review the candidate/proposition information prior to completing the ballot;

receiving, at each individual user station, selections made by the voter in completing the ballot of candidates and propositions;

receiving, at each individual user station, a digital signature from the voter;

associating the digital signature with the completed ballot selections;

transmitting the ballot selections and signature over the wide area network;

receiving the ballot selections and signature at the central processor server;

verifying the digital signature at the central processor server, including confirming a voting status;

recording the verified received ballot selections;

tabulating the verified received ballot selections with other verified received ballot selections from other voters at the central processor server; and

publishing the tabulated selections.

51. (NEW) The method of Claim 50, further comprising transmitting a poll to the voter at each of the plurality of individual user stations.

52. (NEW) The method of Claim 51, wherein the poll is generated on one of the individual user stations.

53. (NEW) The method of Claim 51, further comprising transmitting a petition to the voter at each of the plurality of individual user stations.

54. (NEW) The method of Claim 53, wherein receiving a digital signature comprises receiving biometric information, the biometric information associated with the voter in a demographic database stored on the central server.

55. (NEW) A method of conducting a poll over a wide area network, the method comprising:
electronically transmitting a polling survey to a plurality of users connected the wide area network;

receiving a plurality of electronic responses to the polling survey from the users;

associating each response with personal information regarding a corresponding user, the personal information excluding the identity of the corresponding user;

tabulating the responses; and

generating a demographic report relating the responses to the personal information.

56. (NEW) The method of Claim 55, wherein the personal information is derived from a pre-existing database and associating each response comprises automatically associating the personal information with the corresponding response.

57. (NEW) The method of Claim 56, wherein the pre-existing database resides on an individual user station on the wide area network and is at least partially modifiable by the user.

58. (NEW) The method of Claim 56, wherein

the pre-existing database resides on a central server on the wide area network; and

associating each response comprises associating identifying information regarding the user with the response at an individual user station on the wide area network,

transmitting the response to the central server, and associating the response with the personal information of the corresponding user at the central server.

59. (NEW) The method of Claim 58, wherein the identifying information comprises a digital signature.

60. (NEW) The method of Claim 58, wherein the digital signature comprises biometric information.

61. (NEW) The method of Claim 55, wherein generating the poll is conducted on an individual user station on the wide area network.

62. (NEW) A system for decentralized balloting, comprising:

at least one central server;

a plurality of user stations remote from and in communication with the central server across a wide area network, each of the user stations including a biometric digitizing device;

a ballot generator transmitting ballots to each of the user stations;

a poll generator transmitting polls to selectable user stations;

an associator on each of the user stations, the associator associating ballot selections with a digital signature and associating poll responses with the digital signature;

a verifier on the central server receiving digital signatures, associated ballot selections and associated poll responses, the verifier verifying the validity of the associated ballot selections and associated poll responses; and

a tabulator compiling ballot selections and poll responses from the plurality of user stations.

63. (NEW) The system of Claim 62, further comprising a demographic database on the central server, associating the associated ballot selections and the associated poll responses with demographic information by way of the digital signatures;
64. (NEW) The system of Claim 62, wherein the wide area network comprises the Internet™.
65. (NEW) The system of Claim 62, wherein the poll generator resides on each of the user stations.
66. (NEW) The system of Claim 62, further comprising a demographic profiler on each user station, the demographic profiler storing personal information of a user.
67. (NEW) The system of Claim 64, wherein the demographic profiler automatically associates the personal information with outgoing data without associating identifying information.
68. (NEW) A method of signing a petition using a digital network comprising the steps of:
- placing a petition into a central processor server on the digital network;
 - displaying the petition to a voter at an individual user station on the digital network;
 - inputting, at the individual user station, a digital signature from the voter;
 - associating the digital signature with the petition;
 - encrypting the associated signature and petition;
 - transmitting the encrypted signature and petition over the digital network;
 - receiving the encrypted signature and petition at the central processor server;
 - decrypting the received petition and signature;
 - verifying the digital signature at the central processor server;
 - tabulating the verified signature; and

reporting the tabulated signatures and the associated petition to a governmental authority.

69. (NEW) The method of Claim 68, further comprising the steps of:

inputting, at the individual user station, demographic data from the voter;
transmitting the demographic data over the digital network;
receiving the demographic data at the central processor server;
compiling the demographic data; and
reporting the demographic data.

70. (NEW) The method of Claim 68, wherein the step of inputting a digital signature comprises scanning a biometric feature of the voter and digitizing the scanned characteristics of the biometric feature.

71. (NEW) The method of Claim 68, wherein the step of placing a petition into a central processor server on the digital network comprises the steps of:

establishing, at a remote server, a citizen web site associated with an individual user;
placing a petition on the citizen web site; and
linking the citizen web site to the central processor server on the digital network.

72. (NEW) A method of signing a petition using a digital network comprising the steps of:

placing a petition comprising proposition for action into a central processor server on the digital network;
displaying the petition to a voter through presentation at an individual user station on the digital network;

linking the voter to proposition information provided at a remote server on the digital network, wherein the voter at the individual user station may review such information prior to signing the ballot;

communicating questions, comments, and opinions from the voter to proposition forums;

inputting, at the individual user station, a digital signature from the voter;

associating the digital signature with the petition propositions;

encrypting the associated signature and petition propositions;

transmitting the encrypted signature and petition propositions over the digital network;

receiving the encrypted signature and petition propositions at the central processor server;

decrypting the received petition propositions and signature;

verifying the digital signature at the central processor server, wherein the verification process comprises confirming a voting status of the voter, said confirmation of voting status comprising confirming entitlement to vote according to voter age and voter residence and confirming that the voter has not already signed the petition;

recording the verified received signature on the petition;

tabulating the verified received signature with other verified received signatures from other voters at the central processor server;

compiling demographic information based on voter residence; and

reporting the tabulated signatures to a governmental authority to which the petition is directed.

73. (NEW) A method of taking an interactive poll using a digital network comprising the steps of:

placing a slate of poll questions into a central processor server on the digital network;

displaying poll questions to the voter through presentation at the individual user station on the digital network;

inputting, at the individual user station, answers to the poll questions from the voter;

inputting, at the individual user station, voter demographic data;

associating the answers to the poll with the voter demographic data;

encrypting the associated answers and voter demographic data;

transmitting the encrypted answers and demographic data over the digital network;

receiving the encrypted answers and demographic data at the central processor server;

decrypting the received answers and demographic data;

tabulating the received answers;

compiling the received demographic data; and

reporting the tabulated answers and compiled demographic data to the voter and to elected government officials.

74. (NEW) The method of Claim 73, further comprising the steps of:

linking the voter to issue and candidate information provided at remote servers on the digital network;

displaying the issue and candidate information to the voter; and

communicating questions, comments and opinions from the voter to candidates and issue forums.

75. (NEW) The method of Claim 73, further comprising, after the step of reporting the tabulated answers and compiled demographic data, the step of linking the voter and the elected government officials to detailed breakdowns of the compiled demographic data.

76. (NEW) The method of Claim 73, further comprising the steps of:

soliciting, at the individual user station, polling issue proposals from the voter;

inputting, at the individual user station, polling issue proposals from the voter;

transmitting the polling proposals over the digital network;

receiving the polling proposals at the central processor server;

recording the received polling proposals;

testing the polling proposals against predetermined criteria; and

placing tested polling proposals into the central processor server on the digital network.

77. (NEW) The method of Claim 76, further comprising the step of randomly selecting the polling proposals to be placed into the central processor server on the digital network.

78. (NEW) A method of presenting poll questions and soliciting answers from voters using a digital network comprising the steps of:

placing a slate of issues, candidates, and associated poll questions into a central processor server on the digital network;

displaying the slate of issues and candidates to a voter through presentation at an individual user station on the digital network;

linking the voter to issue and candidate information provided at a remote server on the digital network, wherein the voter at the individual user station may review such information prior to answering the poll;

communicating questions, comments, and opinions from the voter to issue forums and to candidates;

displaying poll questions in sequence to the voter through presentation at the individual user station on the digital network;

inputting, at the individual user station, answers to the poll questions from the voter;

inputting, at the individual user station, voter demographic data;

soliciting, at the individual user station, polling issue proposals from the voter;

inputting, at the individual user station, polling issue proposals from the voter;

associating the answers to the poll questions with the voter demographic data and the polling issue proposals;

encrypting the associated answers to the poll question, voter demographic data and polling issue proposals;

transmitting the encrypted answers, demographic data and polling proposals over the digital network;

receiving the encrypted answers, demographic data, and polling proposals at the central processor server;

decrypting the received answers, demographic data and polling proposals;

recording the received answers with other received answers from other voters at the central processor server;

tabulating the received answers with other received answers from other voters at the central processor server;

compiling the received demographic data with other received demographic data from other voters;

testing the polling proposals against predetermined criteria for inclusion in subsequent polling;

placing tested polling proposals into the central processor server on the digital network; and

reporting the tabulated answers and demographic data.

79. (NEW) A method of operating an interactive town hall involving a plurality of individuals using a digital network comprising the steps of:

(a) placing a slate of issues, elected officials, and candidates into a central processor server on the digital network;

(b) displaying the slate of issues, elected officials, and candidates to a plurality of individuals through presentation at individual user stations on the digital network;

(c) linking the individuals to issue, elected official, and candidate information provided at remote servers on the digital network, wherein the individuals may review such information prior to engaging in the interactive town hall;

(d) communicating, by instant messaging, email, or file transfer, questions, comments, and opinions from the individual to issue spokespersons, to elected officials, and to candidates;

(e) soliciting answers, comments, opinions and questions from the issue spokespersons, from the elected officials and from the candidates at issue forum servers, elected official servers, and candidate servers on the digital network; and

(f) repeating steps (d) and (e) for a selected period of time, said individual changing with each repetition.

80. (NEW) The method of Claim 79, further comprising the step of testing questions, comments, and opinions received from the individual against predetermined criteria prior to communicating to the issue spokespersons, the elected officials, or the candidates.

81. (NEW) The method of Claim 79, wherein said step of displaying the slate of issues, elected officials, and candidates comprises establishing virtual reality images of the issues, elected officials, candidates and a town hall environment at the individual user stations on the digital network.

82. (NEW) A method of voter registration using a digital network comprising the steps of:

placing a voter registration site into a central processor server on the digital network;

soliciting voter information from a voter at an individual user station on the digital network;

inputting, at the individual user station, the voter information;

inputting, at the individual user station, a digital signature from the voter;

associating the individual signature with the voter registration data;

encrypting the associated signature and registration data;

transmitting the encrypted signature and data over the digital network;

receiving the encrypted signature and data at the central processor server;

decrypting the received signature and data;
verifying the received signature and its appropriate association with the received data;
recording the voter registration data; and
confirming the registration of the voter and the receipt of the voter registration data.

83. (NEW) The method of Claim 82, further comprising the steps of:

inputting, at the individual user station, separately verifiable identification data associated with the voter seeking registration; and
separately verifying said identification data through additional records accessible from the central processor server.

84. (NEW) The method of operating an online debate involving a plurality of debate participants and a plurality of individuals using a digital network comprising the steps of:

(a) placing a panel of debate participants into a central processor server on the digital network;

(b) displaying the panel of debate participants to the plurality of individuals through presentation at individual user stations on the digital network;

(c) linking the individuals to issue and debate participant information provided at remote servers on the digital network, wherein the individuals may review such information prior to engaging in the online debate;

(d) communicating preestablished questions and questions from the individuals to the debate participants;

(e) soliciting answers, comments, opinions and questions from the debate participants at the central processor server; and

(f) repeating steps (d) and (e) for a selected period of time, said questions changing with each repetition.

85. (NEW) The method of Claim 84, further comprising the step of randomly selecting the questions from the individuals to be communicated to the debate participants.

86. (NEW) The method of Claim 78, wherein individuals and/or groups may work alone or together in conducting polls, petition drives, town hall sessions, and/or elections using the digital network.
